

*Bonaventure de Periers*

A HAPPY art in the relation of a story is, doubtless, a very agreeable talent—it has obtained La Fontaine all the applause which his charming *naïveté* deserves.

“*Bonaventure de Periers, Valet de Chambre de la Royne de Navarre,*” of whom the French have three little volumes of tales in prose, shows that pleasantry and sportive vein in which the tales of that time frequently abound. The following short anecdote is not given as the best specimen of our author, but as it introduces a novel etymology of a word in great use.

“A student at law, who studied at Poitiers, had tolerably improved himself in cases of equity; not that he was overburthened with learning, but his chief deficiency was a want of assurance and confidence to display his knowledge. His father passing by Poitiers, recommended him to read aloud, and to render his memory more prompt by continued exercise. To obey the injunctions of his father, he determined to read at the *Ministry*. In order to obtain a certain assurance, he went every day into a garden, which was a very secret spot, being at a distance from any house, and where there grew a great number of fine large cabbages. Thus for a long time he pursued his studies, and repeated his lectures

to these cabbages, addressing them by the title of *gentlemen*; and balancing his periods to them as if they had composed an audience of scholars. After a fortnight or three weeks’ preparation, he thought it was high time to take the *chair*: imagining that he should be able to lecture his scholars as well as he had before done his cabbages. He comes forward, he begins his oration—but before a dozen words his tongue freezes between his teeth! Confused and hardly knowing where he was, all he could bring out was—*Domini, Ego bene video quod non estis caules*; that is to say—for there are some who will have everything in plain English—*Gentlemen, I now clearly see you are not cabbages!* In the *garden* he could conceive the *cabbages* to be *scholars*: but in the *chair*, he could not conceive the *scholars* to be *cabbages*.”

On this story La Monnoye has a note, which gives a new origin to a familiar term.

“The hall of the School of Equity at Poitiers, where the institutes were read, was called *La Ministerie*. On which head, Florimond de Remond (book vii. ch. 11), speaking of Albert Babinot, one of the first disciples of Calvin, after having said he was called ‘The good man,’ adds, that because he had been a student of the

institutes at this *Ministerie* of Poitiers, Calvin, and others, styled him *Mr. Minister*; from whence, afterwards, Calvin took occasion to give the name of MINISTERS to the pastors of his church.”